

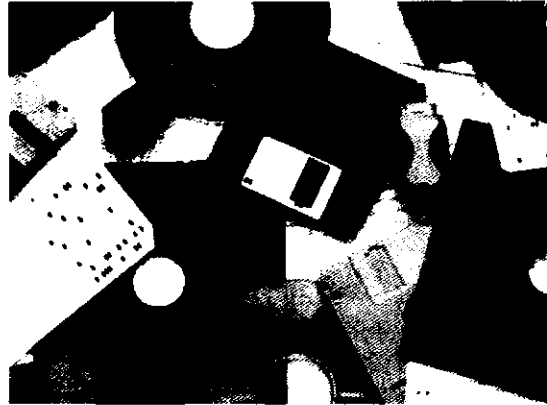
Building Montana's Digital Records Preservation Capability

"Records are the foundation of open government supporting the principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration. Well-managed records can be used to assess the impact of programs, to improve business processes, and to share knowledge across the government. Records protect the rights... and hold officials accountable..."

-Joint statement Office of OMB and NARA regarding Presidential Memorandum "Managing Government Records", August 24, 2012.

"Electronic records can help ensure the rights of the public through a greater accessibility than ever before, but only if creators, managers and users recognize their importance and contribute resources to their preservation."

-Council of State Archivists, "10 reasons why electronic records need special attention", 2014.



"The state archivist shall preserve noncurrent records of permanent value to the state"

-Montana Codes Annotated 22-3-203

Issues: The Montana State Archives is legislatively mandated to preserve records of permanent value to the state (MCA 22-3-203), but does not have the skill set or infrastructure to do so in an electronic format. Past practice of printing off and filing electronic records is no longer tenable. Agencies are accumulating large quantities of historically significant information that is currently at risk

Legislative Bill Request: We are seeking funds (\$208,000) to contract for an Electronic Records and Information Management Specialist to assist the State Archives to develop digital preservation capabilities. The contractor, over the course of the 2015-2016 biennium, would provide guidance needed to establish and develop the State Archives ability to collect, preserve and provide access to **historically significant** Montana State government records created or maintained in a digital format.

Deliverables:

- Written reports delineating the most cost effective and efficient method for the State Archives to transfer, manage, preserve and provide access to electronic records. This will include determining staffing, hardware/software, policies/procedures and contracted service within a **state-wide preservation plan**.
- Develop and **implement a survey** and conduct interviews with select agency Records Managers to gather a cross section of preservation needs and challenges across state government. Use resulting data to establish recommendations on technology platform options and mechanisms to transfer electronics records from the agencies to the State Archives. Also use data to determine which of those agencies would be best suited for future pilot project.

Education and Local Government
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- Create and provide **online training modules** for Archives Staff, State Records Committee and major stake holders on the needs for and implementation of electronic records management, preservation and access.
- Consult with SITSD regarding the interoperability of the upcoming Electronic Records Management (ERM) system and anticipated preservation systems in the State Archives. This would include recommendations on technology platform options and mechanisms. ERM systems alone are not intended to be an archive for permanent historic information. The **ERM would interact and transfer information and metadata to an archive level digital preservation system.**

Benefits: Consultant will create a road map for the State Archives to meet its legal mandate to preserve electronic records of enduring historical significance, and to work in concert with the Secretary of State, State Records Committee and Local Government Records Committee to promote the proper management and disposition of electronic government records. The resulting work will:

- Allow for the most efficient and cost effective path to digital preservation
- Ensure rapidly changing technologies do not create an “Information Dark Age”
- Compliment efforts of SITSD and its establishment of an ERM
- Compliment efforts to improve overall Electronic Records Management practices

Challenges: Professional standards tell us that there is no “one size fits all”. State Records Managers and Archivists across the country are struggling to determine how they can best implement and manage digital preservation capabilities. Many are turning to specialized contractors. **Sample projects:**

- **Wyoming:** 2011-2013 State Legislature funded the Wyoming State Archives to hire consultants to study best practices for electronic records retention and storage (\$200,000); and review/recreate retention schedules and policies/procedures for capture, transfer, preservation and access to electronic records (\$208,000).
- **North Dakota:** 2013 State Legislature of North Dakota approves funding (\$100,000) to hire consultant to identify information technology strategy, policy, framework, and costs to capture, manage, preserve and provide access to digital records with historical value.

Risks: Costs of not acting to manage and preserve historical electronic records:

- In a political, cultural and historic sense.... incalculable. The loss of documentation of citizen rights, legislative intent, gubernatorial policies, or agency procedures would result in the loss of public trust when we could not meet their expectations of legislatively mandated openness and transparency.
- Individual agencies, without the infrastructure or training to maintain and preserve their long-term historic records, will allow those records to become corrupted and unusable.

The State Archives exists to take responsibility for the preservation and access of historic records, regardless of format. An electronic preservation archive maintained by trained and qualified archivists is ideal for preserving these electronic records for the citizens of Montana.